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**MASSACHUSETTS
BOARD OF
LIBRARY
COMMISSIONERS**

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS
COLLECTION

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University of Massachusetts
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*... supporting and developing
library service throughout the
Commonwealth*

WHO WE ARE

Strong libraries are essential to education and lifelong learning, to economic development, to strong communities and to a strong democracy.

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners supports, develops, coordinates, improves and promotes library services throughout the Commonwealth. The Board strives to provide every resident of the Commonwealth with full and equal access to library information resources regardless of geographic location, social or economic status, age, level of physical or intellectual ability or cultural background.

The goals of the Board of Library Commissioners are to maintain a strong system of free public libraries, to coordinate and support statewide and regional programs, to promote resource sharing and the utilization of electronic information technology by libraries and to provide library services to blind and physically handicapped residents. The Board also advises municipalities and trustees regarding the operation and maintenance of public libraries and is responsible for the administration of state and federal programs for Massachusetts libraries.

The Board was established in 1890 under Chapter 78 of the Massachusetts General Laws and consists of nine commissioners appointed by the governor.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF LIBRARIES

In 1993, the Board of Library Commissioners adopted the *Strategic Plan for the Future of Library Services in Massachusetts*. The goals of this plan are to strengthen and expand library services available to all residents of the Commonwealth, to eliminate current barriers which create serious inequities in access to information for many residents and to insure that all residents have access to new information technologies which are essential to economic development and education.

These goals would be achieved through expansion of the present regional public library systems to link all academic, school and special libraries in the Commonwealth, through statewide access to specialized information resources and resource sharing programs and by establishing a statewide electronic network linking libraries and users.

The governor and legislature took the first step in implementing the *Strategic Plan* through the passage of Chapter 85 of the Acts of 1994, which established the Massachusetts Library and Information Network. Full implementation of this network would provide libraries and users with electronic access to:

- catalogs of over 50 million library holdings in the Commonwealth
- information on thousands of magazines and journals in Massachusetts libraries
- federal, state and local government information
- a variety of reference databases, indexes and electronic documents
- selected resources available through the Internet, a global "information highway."

Legislation to fully implement the *Strategic Plan* is currently under consideration by the state legislature.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

◆ State Aid to Public Libraries

The Board of Library Commissioners administers the State Aid to Public Libraries Program, which awards \$6.8 million annually to municipal libraries. Three grants, each based on a different disbursement formula, are awarded to municipalities whose public libraries meet statutory and regulatory requirements. The State Aid to Public Libraries Program encourages libraries to meet certain minimum requirements and develop improved services, while assisting those municipalities with less revenue raising capability and those who lend materials to the residents of other communities.

◆ Public Library Advisory and Technical Assistance

The Public Library Advisory and Technical Assistance Program provides assistance to municipal officials, boards of trustees, library directors and library support organizations. Board staff advise on laws, regulations and policies affecting local public libraries, governance issues, roles and responsibilities of trustees, planning and evaluation of library services and fund raising for libraries. Staff also work closely with the Massachusetts Library Association, the Massachusetts Library Trustees Association and the Massachusetts Friends of Libraries.

◆ Telecommunications for Resource Sharing

The Massachusetts Library and Information Network provides each participating library with Internet-based access to library catalogs and information databases through a local connection to one of the current ten automated resource sharing networks. An estimated 272 public libraries, representing 93 percent of the population, are affiliated with these networks. Using state and federal funds, the Board of Library Commissioners coordinates and guides the development and expansion of the statewide network to extend services to all of the Commonwealth's libraries.

◆ Regional Library Systems and Library of Last Recourse

The Board administers a program of regional services which allow libraries to provide users with materials and information otherwise unavailable locally. The three regional library systems provide services to public libraries, including interlibrary loan, reference referral, the delivery of materials between libraries, continuing education, technical assistance, bookmobile services and specialized collections of print and nonprint materials. The Board also administers funds for the maintenance and development of research collections at the Boston Public Library, which serves as Library of Last Recourse for all residents of the Commonwealth.

◆ Libraries Serving the Blind and Physically Handicapped

Access to library materials for the blind/visually impaired or those certified as unable to read normal print are provided by two libraries. The Braille and Talking Book Library at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown serves patrons in the eastern and western regions of the state. The subregional Talking Book Library at the Worcester Public Library provides services for patrons in the central region. In addition, a number of public libraries in each region designated as Access Centers offer assistive aids. The Board administers state funds to the libraries at Watertown and Worcester and offers federal grant support to other public libraries seeking to expand services to disabled people.

◆ Public Library Construction

Board staff work with libraries on plans for new construction, the redesign of older facilities and the addition of features required for handicapped access. Technical assistance is also provided on space utilization and the selection of library furnishings. In addition, the Board conducts the state-funded Massachusetts Public Library Construction Program and the federal LSCA construction program as funds are appropriated. Two competitive grant rounds (1994 and 1996) will allocate \$45 million in state funds for construction.

◆ Data Coordination and Analysis

The Board collects and analyzes financial, demographic and personnel data, as well as information on library circulation and services. This data is compiled and published each year in reports which are distributed to public library directors and trustees. Library statistics are also supplied to state and municipal officials to encourage strong local and state support and equitable allocation of resources. In addition, the agency actively participates in the Federal-State Cooperative System (FSCS) by submitting data for Massachusetts and by direct involvement in FSCS programs.

◆ Library-Based Literacy

Public libraries have become increasingly involved in the coordination and delivery of literacy services in the community. They provide outreach programs to people with low-level reading skills and also to those with limited English-speaking ability. Library-based literacy programs include developing adult new reader and curriculum collections, providing literacy support services for the community and offering one-on-one or small group instruction at the library. Agency staff provide consultation and technical assistance to public libraries in program development, selection of materials, proposal writing and identification of outside funding sources.

◆ Preservation and Collection Management

The Board of Library Commissioners coordinates a statewide preservation program for all types of libraries and archives in order to preserve valuable special collections, prolong the life of circulating collections and insure the continued availability of these materials to library users. The preservation program reaches librarians and archivists through workshops, technical assistance, preservation information services and federal grant awards. An adjunct to this effort is a cooperative collection management program that works with automated resource sharing networks and other library consortia to facilitate the development of cooperative collection management policies. These policies address collection assessment and development, preservation and access to library materials within and beyond the networks.

◆ Certification of Library Personnel

In order to insure that communities have the services of qualified library personnel, the Board grants Certificates of Librarianship to applicants based on work experience or education level as set forth in statute and regulation. The Certificates are required of all Massachusetts public library directors as a prerequisite for municipalities to receive State Aid to Public Libraries.

◆ Library Reference/Research Services

The reference and research library supports Board programs with an up-to-date collection of professional materials and resources, including access to electronic databases and Internet resources. Members of the library community are encouraged to borrow materials and make active use of the library's reference and research services. The library's holdings may be searched through the NOBLE network on the Internet.

◆ Continuing Education and Training

Board staff work in conjunction with the three regional library systems and other library groups to provide a wide range of continuing education and training programs for library trustees, staff and friends of the library organizations. Programs related to library technology and fund raising are agency priorities. During 1994, a federal grant to the agency supported a series of workshops designed to strengthen science reference services in over 375 public and school libraries.

◆ Federal Library Services and Construction Act Grants

The agency administers the federal Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) program in Massachusetts. The purpose of LSCA is to assist states in the extension and improvement of public library services. The three titles currently administered through this agency are Title I - Library Services, Title II - Construction and Title III - Interlibrary Cooperation. Massachusetts administers competitive grant programs for which individual public libraries, regional library systems, cooperating groups of different types of libraries, state institution libraries and agencies serving the certified blind and physically handicapped are eligible to apply. The State Advisory Council on Libraries, a group representing various types of libraries as well as library users, provides valuable advice to staff and the Board on LSCA programs and the allocation of grant funds.

PUBLICATIONS

The Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners regularly publishes news and information useful to Massachusetts libraries. The following is a list of the agency's publications.

*Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners
Annual Report*

MBLC Notes (published bimonthly)

Directory of Massachusetts Public Libraries

*Massachusetts Public Library Data Reports - Personnel,
Financial Statistics, Circulation & Services and Summary
Tables & Graphs*

LSCA Long-Range Program for Massachusetts

*Strategic Plan for the Future of Library Services in Massa-
chusetts*

Preserved to Serve: the Massachusetts Preservation Agenda

Massachusetts Position Vacancies

Architects for Libraries

Directory of Library Building Consultants in New England

In accordance with the American with Disabilities Act, all publications may be requested in electronic format for use by individuals with disabilities.

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